

Steve Westly
California State Controller



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CONTROLLER WESTLY'S INVESTIGATORS AND HI-TECH TASK FORCE TAKE DOWN FRAUD SCHEME

Sacramento, April 15, 2003 – In a continuing crackdown on identity theft, State Controller Steve Westly today announced an arrest in a fraud case involving \$1.6 million in State funds. Prince Blaise Nwene will be in court in Los Angeles Wednesday facing charges of theft, ID theft, forgery, and receiving stolen property.

"We are cracking down on these organized schemes to protect Californians against fraud," stated Controller Westly. "The Controller's Office uses every precaution and prevention against fraud and will continue to expose criminals to protect State funds and innocent victims."

Mr. Nwene is accused of trying to cash three State Controller's Office warrants made payable to Basic Fiber, Inc., a Los Angeles company. Mr. Nwene established two fictitious bank accounts in the name of Basic Fiber, Inc. He was arrested in Los Angeles when he attempted to redeem the stolen money using an assumed name.

The State Controller's Office investigators discovered the crime and worked with agents from the Sacramento Valley Regional Hi-Tech Crimes/Identification Theft Task Force, as well as agents from the Southern California Hi-Tech Task Force, and the California Office of the Attorney General, Department of Justice, to bring down this scam and move toward prosecution.

"Over the years, we've seen an increase in high tech crimes, but law enforcement is using technology to fight back," said Sergeant Craig Potter of the Sacramento Valley Regional Hi-Tech Crimes/ID Theft Task Force. "This case is an example of how our investment in fighting high tech crimes is paying off."

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